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her grandmother had secured the dyes for it from the leaves and petals of flowers which she gathered.

This exhibition has succeeded in attracting a great many foreigners to the Museum. It is held in connection with the educational work of the Museum, with the purpose of pointing out to the

foreign population the real artistic worth of their possessions and in the hope that it will help them to appreciate other works of art at the Museum. Lectures in different languages, which are given each week in connection with the exhibition, are largely attended, and generally much interest is being shown.



BOW VALLEY. B. C.

L. H. MEAKIN

## THE SOCIETY OF WESTERN ARTISTS

BY SPENCER HACKETT

**T**HE Society of Western Artists, whose sixteenth annual exhibition is now making the circuit of the larger cities of the Middle West, was founded for the purpose of bringing together, once a year, representative work done in the various centers of the West, and making artists and public better known to each other, as well as to give art in the West a more authoritative standing. To some

extent, but not to the extent hoped for, perhaps this had been accomplished, and year by year the efforts of the Society are becoming better recognized. That the artists of the Society, through this movement, hoped to become better known and gain a wider patronage, were the moving impulses, goes without saying. The first they have attained, but as to patronage that yet remains in its in-



HORSE MARKET IN WINTER

RICHARD LORENZ

fancy, which is unfortunate; for without sufficient patronage to keep the artist encouraged art cannot flourish at its best, and is ever handicapped by a certain timidity in expression, or a reckless impudence in experiment, both of which are born of uncertainty, and neither of which leads to a steady development of purpose.

The varying excellence or lack of excellence that is characteristic of the exhibitions of this Society is due to the above causes, and there is little hope for decided improvement—improvement such as will make these exhibitions distinguished, until there is either better patronage or the artists cast all timidity aside and consider nothing but their own development as artists. Only thus can the Society of Western Artists make itself felt as a living force in the growth of art in this country.

Until the artists of this Society feel that here, in the West, as good work can be done and must be done, as anywhere in the country, its existence, in the best sense, still remains to be justified. That it can get together exhibitions of more or

less general interest has been demonstrated time and again, which is good enough in its way, but does not completely fulfil its first high hopes and purposes. Considering the average excellence of the present exhibition, which many think is the best the Society had assembled, it might be asked what was lacking. The average is high, which is well enough in its way, but it is not enough to win that recognition which the Society seeks. There must be initiative, of which there is little; there must be the flavor of locality, which likewise is largely absent. The majority of the pictures shown could as well have been painted in one part of our country as another, and few need have been painted in the West. There is too much following after, and not enough leading; there is too much the feeling that perhaps we have seen these things or something like them before; there is not enough of looking about, of seeing new things with a fresh eye; not enough of the flavor of locality, of distinction either of method or motive, which all art

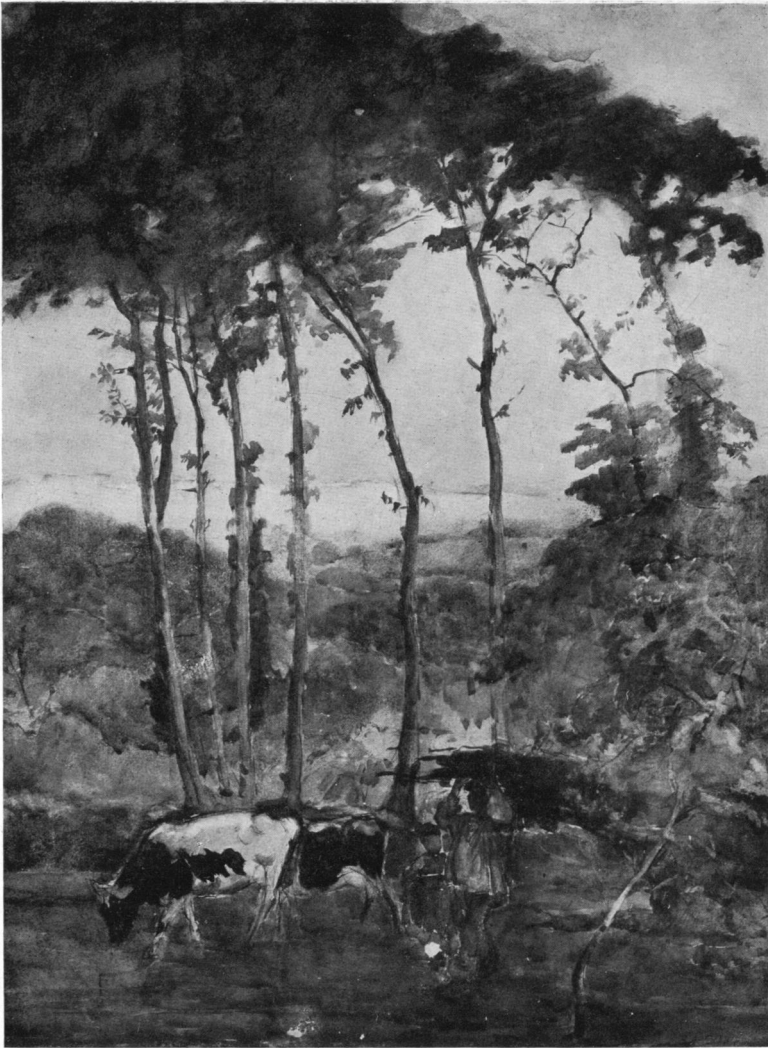


THE SPANISH SHAWL

RUTH PRATT

must have if it is worth while. The West is not timid nor hesitating; not lacking in initiative; therefore, Western art should not be so, and, yet, it is. Certainly this does not arise from any lack of sufficient training, for most of the

members of this Society have studied at home and abroad; have had the best that schools can give, and are qualified to express in terms of art their feelings in respect to life and the things about them. A good motto for the members of this



EVENING

ALICE SCHILLE

Society would be, "Now is the time and this is the place," which if lived up to would give new life to their exhibitions.

It is true that there are many things these Western artists have to contend with that Eastern artists have not, which prevent their natural and continuous development. Many of them teach, and write, and lecture during the greater part of the year, which may be a good thing from an educational point of view, but is not specially helpful to the creation of works of art. Many of them work alone,

and all are widely scattered, preventing that emulation and rivalry for excellence which is so often a spur when artists are more closely associated with one another. Few artists are so constituted that they can develop in isolation; most of them need the stimulus that comes from association with men of kindred temperament. Not necessarily that they should agree, for even sharp rivalry or fierce opposition is good for them; but that they should feel not entirely alone, and separated from their kind. This is too often

the case in the West, where even a good artist is often found content to repeat himself, or remain satisfied with what he has done, because there are few to spur him to further effort toward higher achievement.

The wide separation of the membership, the lack of intimacy, the diversity of aim and accomplishment in this Society is the cause for that seeming divergence, confusion, and absence of unity of impression, which is so often seen in their exhibitions. Variety is commonly supposed to give an added interest to exhibitions, but in this case it does not, for it is almost impossible to enjoy even the best when it is hemmed in with things that clash, and fight, and kill each other. This militates greatly to the disadvantage of the Society's exhibitions when they are contracted and compared to the one-man shows or groups of selected pictures from the East and abroad that are continually making the rounds of the galleries and museums of the Western cities. Where the latter are characterized by a certain unity of effect and kinship of method and intention that impresses, the former are scattered and their impressiveness lost by a lack of unity of purpose, and the wide differences in aim and accomplishment. And yet this is unavoidable, for the juries must be liberal in their judgments and avoid narrowness and too great severity, not only that they may get together an exhibition of what is really being done in the West, but that the purpose of the Society may be at all fulfilled in encouraging Western men to exhibit, and animate them with a common purpose to win some kind of recognition for the profession as a field for honorable endeavor.

There have been many good pictures exhibited by the Society during its life; pictures that have afterwards been recognized and honored in stronger exhibitions both at home and abroad; the membership embraces men who have served on great juries and have won medals in international exhibitions; men who still live and paint in the West, and are full of enthusiasm; but the rank and file is

continually changing. Some drop art, others lose interest or become discouraged, some follow fortune to the East; to some, fortune comes, and they feel no need of the Society, and a great many long for the atmosphere of the place where they were trained, and think they can work nowhere else; and but few of them expect or want to stay where they are, forgetting that every artist worth the name must make his own atmosphere, paint the place and the things he knows best with understanding and feeling, not letting go the traditions on which all art is founded, nor blinding himself to the newer spirit and the changes of to-day.

And so, although the Society of Western Artists has had many interesting exhibitions, and in a way served the purpose for which it was founded, it has not yet found itself, and will not until its membership wakes to the realization that to justify its name it must believe in itself, must believe in the West, must not hope to gain something somewhere else, but must gain it here; and by reality, sincerity, and enthusiasm of spirit create work that shall be entirely convincing, that shall have its own peculiar distinction, and be truly of the West. Here they must live; here they must work; here gain a patronage and force recognitions. No easy task, it is true, but well worth while, and altogether possible.

The Society has done well; but it has yet to justify its name, and it will.

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As further evidence to the fact that there is enormous promise of art development in the west, it may be stated that in the current exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts thirty-eight of the artists represented reside west of the Alleghany mountains. One of the largest and most successful art schools in the country is the school of the Chicago Art Institute, and it is reported in Paris that the majority of the American art students there to-day are from our western states. If those artists of distinction who were born in the west were to be named, the list would undoubtedly be longer and fuller than many suspect.—THE EDITOR.